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SUBJECT: SOMALIA DART SITUATION REPORT 1

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Summary

1. As of January 4, the UN does not expect to issue a Flash Appeal or a revised Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) for Somalia. As the humanitarian community adapts to the evolving situation, Lower Juba, Middle Juba, and Middle Shabelle regions have emerged as agencies' top response priorities. The health, nutrition, food security, and protection sectors are of primary humanitarian concern. The closure of the Kenyan border has caused hundreds of Somalis to be deported from Kenya and prevented thousands from leaving Somalia. Passage of humanitarian vehicles from Kenya into Somalia continues to be limited. New reports of increasing harassment of humanitarian staff underscore the challenges of re-engaging in Somalia.
End Summary.

OCHA Somalia Meeting

2. On January 3, USAID's Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/DCHA) activated a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) to assist in coordinating and responding to the humanitarian needs in Somalia. Team members attended the Somalia donor coordination meeting on January 4, at which the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) announced that despite the recent fighting in Somalia, the strategic priorities of the 2007 CAP will continue to guide the humanitarian response in Somalia. This reflects the consensus within the humanitarian community that the conflict has not created significant new needs. However, Somalis

continue to suffer from the effects of drought and flooding. The following sections summarize the key points of the meeting.

Current Somalia Context

¶3. There has been no large-scale fighting in Somalia since December 28, but agencies have begun to report conflict-related injuries and deaths. Recently, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reported that 800 people had sustained injuries as a result of the conflict. Additionally, the Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG) requested the assistance of the International Labor Organization (ILO) in burying 1,000 corpses in Bay Region. (These figures are estimates, although it is clear that the conflict caused casualties, accurate figures are unavailable.)

¶4. The Council of Islamic Courts (CIC) appears to have been defeated, but its continuing presence in Somalia is a potential danger for aid agencies seeking to resume activities. Additionally, former warlords are reportedly returning to power in several towns, causing concern among aid agencies.

¶5. The TFG Prime Minister Ali Muhammed Gedi has called for the resumption of humanitarian activities. Against a backdrop of increasing insecurity and lack of access in Somalia, humanitarian agencies are carefully planning how to redeploy staff and restart activities. Many have not resumed full activities due to the continuing uncertainty in Somalia.

Current Response Priorities

¶6. Despite the recent fighting, current response

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priorities remain largely unchanged from those following the flooding. Lower Juba Region is the most severely affected area. The last assistance that it received was on December 25, when the UN World Food Program (WFP) completed an air-drop. Middle Juba and Middle Shabelle regions are the next priority locations for relief assistance. Livestock vaccinations and surveillance to prevent Rift Valley Fever (RVF) are needed along the Kenyan border. Agencies at the meeting emphasized that the response should be driven by need, not the level of access they have to an area.

¶7. OCHA stated that the strategic priorities in the 2007 CAP remain valid; a revised CAP or Flash Appeal are not planned. CAP priorities include a focus on south and central Somalia, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and early recovery. OCHA reported that the flood response plan is 54 percent funded as of January 4, and additional support for early recovery is needed, and also emphasized that helping the TFG establish law and order is a priority. Furthermore, durable solutions for IDPs, including 250,000 in Mogadishu (from earlier rounds of conflict and drought), are needed. Finally, OCHA stated that donor support is needed to move the humanitarian operation from Nairobi into Somalia, including funding for improving compounds and purchasing vehicles.

Population Movements

¶8. OCHA reported that 4,500 families have been displaced in Galkayo, Mudug Region, in the last two months. Those displaced in Galkayo have mostly come from Hiraan and Galgaduud regions and include new and old caseloads. OCHA emphasized that most recent displacement (estimated at a maximum of 40,000 people) was localized and temporary due to the rapid nature of

the TFG/Ethiopian advance. Many IDPs are expected to return to their homes, largely undamaged by the recent fighting. The next few weeks offer a window of opportunity to find sustainable solutions for Somalis displaced by multiple shocks of drought, flooding, and conflict, the agency believes.

Kenya Border Closure

¶9. On January 3, Kenya closed its border with Somalia, preventing asylum seekers from leaving Somalia. As a result, on January 4, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that 400 Somali women and children were deported to Doble, Somalia, from the Liboi border in Kenya. An additional 4,000 people are reportedly gathered in Doble hoping to flee to Kenya. (This figure may not be accurate, and the UN is trying to verify it.) Their immediate needs reportedly include shelter, health, water, and food. UNHCR is unable to access the asylum seekers from within Somalia or from the Kenyan side of the border. As of January 4, the Government of Kenya (GOK) and the TFG had not granted permission to access them. Even if permission is granted, insecurity may limit relief organizations' ability to provide basic services and food.

¶10. The UNHCR representative criticized the closure of the border on humanitarian principles and said that the UN is currently working with the GOK and the TFG to allow non-combatants, especially women and children, to seek refuge in Kenya and permit the transport of relief supplies via truck from Kenya into Somalia. On January

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4, Ambassador demarched Foreign Minister Tuju, urging Kenya's compliance with its international humanitarian obligations. Since the border closure, UN agencies report that a limited number of trucks have crossed into Somalia from Liboi.

Flood Response Interrupted

¶11. The renewed fighting interrupted the humanitarian community's flood response targeting the 454,000 people displaced by the November-December floods, including USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA)-funded nutrition, health, food security, agriculture, water, sanitation, and hygiene programs. The latest fighting occurred as the flood response was building up capacity and agencies were beginning to reach inaccessible, highly vulnerable areas, such as Lower Juba Region.

¶12. USAID/OFDA provided 12 Zodiac boats and motors to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), valued at \$243,000, to facilitate response efforts in flood-affected regions where damaged and destroyed roads and infrastructure are impeding access and restricting the distribution of relief supplies. In addition, USAID/OFDA has approved \$250,000 from its 2006 contribution to UNICEF's rapid response fund to assist flood victims in Somalia, and also provided \$1.5 million to support UNICEF's flood and conflict interventions in the health and water, sanitation, and hygiene sectors.

Humanitarian Concerns

¶13. Health and Nutrition: On January 8, the UN World Health Organization (WHO) announced that cholera has been confirmed in Kismayo, Lower Juba Region, and Jilib, Middle Juba Region. However, WHO reports that the disease has been contained and medicine and other health supplies are being provided. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and UN agencies are worried about an increase in cases of Acute Watery Diarrhea,

especially in Lower Juba Region. Given Somalia's proximity to Kenya, RVF is also a concern. Kenya confirmed several cases of RVF in December. As of January 4, OCHA reported that no cases of RVF in livestock or humans had been confirmed in Somalia (although Somalia's disease surveillance system is weak in flood and conflict-affected areas). Malnutrition remains a concern in south and central Somalia where flooding and conflict has prevented vulnerable children from accessing feeding programs.

¶14. Food Security: The conflict interrupted post-flood recessional planting, impacting farmers' ability to benefit from the high-levels of rainfall and flood waters. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has temporarily suspended seed distribution in Lower and Middle Juba regions, but plans to resume distribution in the coming weeks, security permitting. FAO has already completed seed distribution for recessional planting in Hiraan Region. OCHA is concerned that the recent increase in food prices and the closure of the Garissa livestock market will impact food security. (The Garissa livestock market is located in Kenya and was closed by the GOK to help control RVF. It serves as the main market for livestock from northeastern Kenya and Somalia.)

¶15. Protection: Relief agencies report a surge in recruitment of child soldiers prior to and at the onset

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of this conflict, especially by the CIC, and the subsequent abandonment of them as the CIC withdrew. Additionally, Puntland authorities have been unable to distinguish the combatants from the non-combatants among the families currently arriving in the region, and have separated men from their families and deported them to southern Somalia.

Increasingly Dangerous Operating Environment

¶16. UN agencies and NGOs in the OCHA meeting reported an increase in staff harassment. The week of January 1, Ethiopian troops detained four UN staff for two days despite attempts to negotiate for their freedom. One NGO reported that a staff member returning from northern Somalia to Mogadishu had been arrested and detained. Several NGOs stated that TFG authorities and the Ethiopian military are suspicious of humanitarian staff traveling within Somalia and have arrested NGO staff as a result. On January 3, between Mogadishu and Merka, Ethiopian troops detained and harassed five staff of the NGO Concern at gun point, accusing the team of being Al Qaida members. The staff members were traveling in vehicles clearly marked as humanitarian. Humanitarian organizations also report an increase in banditry in larger urban and peri-urban areas in newly held TFG territory. At the OCHA meeting, donors were requested to advocate for the protection of humanitarian workers.

Conclusion

¶17. The next few weeks are a critical time in Somalia, and the humanitarian community is poised to respond to the needs of the flood and conflict-affected communities. However, insecurity, attacks on aid workers, and a fluid political and military situation are considerable obstacles for agencies seeking to re-engage in Somalia. The DART is working with current partners to adapt their programs to respond to the opportunities the shifting context offers.

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